

HOARDING FORUM ADDRESSES HOW MUCH STUFF IS ENOUGH

By Kathleen Piché, L.C.S.W., Public Affairs Director



The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) Older Adult System of Care (OASOC), Community and Senior Services (CSS) and Adult Protective Services (APS) presented *How Much Stuff is Enough*, a forum on how to explore effective interventions associated with hoarding. The ninth annual conference was held on June 25 at the California Endowment. Approximately 300 clinical staff, providers, consumers and law enforcement packed the Yosemite room eager to understand and learn how to treat hoarding and related disorders.

Theion Perkins, R.N., LACDMH Program Head, OASOC, welcomed the packed room of attendees. Opening comments continued with Kevin Tsang, L.C.S.W., M.B.A., LACDMH District Chief, OASOC; John Merrill, Human Services Administrator, Adult Protective Services, Program and Planning Division; and Kyle St. George, Director, Sales and Marketing at Steri-Clean.

The morning sessions consisted of a thorough discussion by Catherine Ayers, Ph.D., ABPP, Assistant Professor at University of California, San Diego, about causes and treatment surrounding hoarding issues. Catherine talked about the use of Paxil as a helpful treatment alternative and Cognitive Behavioral Treatment as an effective way to address hoarding issues, noting that effective results take time.



Other speakers included: Christina Nairn, L.C.S.W., GENESIS/FACTS Fire Code and Tina Mayes, M.A., California School of Professional Psychology & Alliant University, who reviewed treatment for older adults. The day was wrapped with a panel discussion.

Hoarding is the excessive collection and retention of things or animals until they interfere with day-to-day functions. The collection of newspapers, magazines, old clothes and other items may cause fires while animal hoarding can spread contagious diseases. Older adults represent a significant number of people who hoard.

Characteristics of Hoarders:

- Perfectionist
- Intelligent
- Isolated
- Procrastinator
- Eccentric
- Indecisive
- Creative
- Feelings of being overwhelmed, out of control, helpless, hopeless, ashamed, anxiety



Hoarding is both a mental health and public health problem that usually has been present for long periods of time; hasty interventions do not resolve it. Interventions without cooperation from the hoarder can have dangerous results. A careful and thorough assessment is needed for successful outcomes and interventions should include the older adult, family and other agencies such as LACDMH, APS, code enforcement, building and safety, animal control and criminal justice departments.